

Visiting ballet's "Evening with Stravinsky" a success

"An Evening with Stravinsky" — Les Grands Ballets Canadiens
Jubilee Auditorium
Wednesday, November 2

review by Cathy Duong

The Alberta Ballet Company presented "An Evening with Stravinsky," one of the many programs the Montreal-based Les Grands Ballets Canadiens has performed across Canada as well as in the Far East, the People's Republic of China, Latin and South America, Europe and the United States.

The evening's program is composed of three main parts. The first, "La Salle Des Pas Perdu", consists of light and airy dances set to the music of Johannes Brahms. Someone who expected the elabo-

rate setting of "The Nutcracker" or "The Snowmaiden" would have been disappointed for the set were very simple. During intermission, some comments in the lobby were "... there were some sloppy parts, but so far I've enjoyed it."

The second part was "after Eden", a 360-degree turnaround from the first number. This scene described "after Eden, the moment after, two figures in a landscape, a tragic landscape of despair, guilt, and deep need." The dancers, Gioconda Barbuto and Reg Dizon, formed two stark figures against a black background. For the first half of their dance routine, although they rarely physically touched, one could still feel the sensuousness of their movements. The choreography for this scene was visually stimulating and unusual, creating a mystical mood. At

times, the dancers resembled two creatures, hesitant and intense during their mating dance. Some observers might find this scene too raw. However, the majority of the audience seemed to choose this routine as their favourite.

The last part, "Les Noces", described the events surrounding the marriage of a country girl. Set against solemn brown backgrounds and backed by sometimes

erratic operatic music, the stoic faces of the dancers clothed in brown, these scenes seemed to describe a solemn ritual rather than a wedding day. The large cast of thirty-five performed well however.

"An Evening with Stravinsky" presented an entertaining glimpse of the work of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Their avant-garde style is a change from classical ballet and should invite a large turn-out the next time in Edmonton.



Paul Menzies

Larry Yakimec and Christine MacInnis in *The Flight of the Earls*: the intensity is there but the accents falter.

Divisiveness of war displayed in Phoenix's Earls

The Flight of the Earls
Phoenix Theatre at the Kaasa
through November 27

review by Elaine Ostry

1971 was a bad time to be a Catholic in Northern Ireland, and as *Flight of the Earls* by Christopher Humble proves, mean times bring out the meanness of people.

The Earl family has a tradition of fighting for the independence and unification of Ireland. Dad died for Ireland, something his two sons, Ian and Michael, keep reminding each other of. Ian and Michael are IRA ringleaders, and the play is set on the eve of the execution of their plot to kill British PM Faulkner.

The plot of the play is too complicated to unravel here; suffice to say that everything starts to go wrong, and their violence turns inward to kill those they love most, and divide their family.

As expected, the women in the family are the peace lovers who want the violence to end, yet become part of it in spite of themselves. The conflict between the male and female characters is intensified when the females learn about the IRA plot. Brigitte did not even realize that her husband Michael was involved in the IRA at all, much less the Provisionals.

Yes, wife is turned against husband, mother against son, brother against brother. The domestication of family violence is a popular theme in plays set in war-torn countries, superb acting and direction, however, keeps this production from becoming tedious and predictable.

The cast works well together, giving a true sense of being a family. Barbara Reese shines as the mother, Kate Earl, who has tried unsuccessfully to keep the IRA out of her house. Reese's performance is controlled and realistic. Un-

fortunately she is given far too many "let's have a nip of whiskey" jokes.

Ian Earl is played by Larry Yakimec, who manages to be remarkably mean without becoming a stereotype. Both he and James Downing, who plays Michael, dominate the stage with their sense of claustrophobic restlessness. Downing skillfully shows Michael's dilemma between being a terrorist and a family man.

Keith Earl, the "little brother" terrorist, adds some humour to this play. His sister-in-law Claire asks him: "Tough life being a terrorist, eh, Keith?" and he responds casually, "Yeah, sometimes." Christopher Thomas keeps his character from becoming a clown, though, and demonstrates Keith's confusion with sensitivity. Jeffrey Hirschfield does a good job with the minor role of Timothy, Brigitte's "simple" brother.

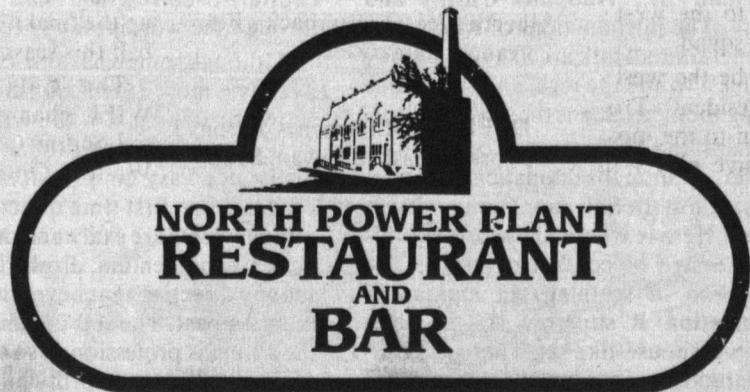
Christine MacInnis plays the key role of Brigitte Earl with riveting intensity. Her shock at discovering the extent of her husband's IRA activities is convincing. Her initial gaiety, though, is a little overplayed. Jane Spidell, on the other hand, plays Brigitte's sister Claire with perhaps too much reserve, which makes her character's dilemmas less clear and immediate.

Director Jim Guedo sets the play at a fast pace, which keeps the audience from predicting what's going to happen next. The special effects (gum, blood) are not convincing, however, the set could use some work: the house looks like a Brothers Grimm creation and the graffiti was so neat it belonged on Sesame Street. The actors' accents faltered occasionally.

But these are minor points. altogether, *The Flight of the Earls* is an interesting play depicting the divisiveness of war. A skilled group of actors bring the emotions of Northern Ireland's troubles to life, creating an intense, moving production.

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